

Statement from Iowa Catholic Conference in 2015

A bill to extend the statute of limitations for civil actions related to childhood sexual abuse was filed early in the session. The ICC opposed the first version of the bill that included a retroactive “window” for civil suits regarding sexual abuse of a minor that would have allowed any lawsuit to come forward for a period of three years. We opposed this because statutes of limitation have been a part of the law for centuries for good reason. The passage of time makes it very difficult for any accused person or institution to defend themselves, including those instances where the institution was not aware of any abuse.

The final version of SF 447 extended the period of time someone can bring a civil suit after being sexually abused as a minor to 25 years, and extended the discovery period to 25 years as well. The ICC registered as undecided on the bill. SF 447 passed the Senate but didn’t move in the House.

Currently, Iowa’s law allows people the opportunity to file a lawsuit against perpetrators and institutions until the person’s 19th birthday, or alternatively, four years after they discover the injury caused by sexual abuse. This discovery can be many years later.